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Statement submitted by Fundacion para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing

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Statement

[Original: Spanish]

Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer welcomes the fact that at its sixty-third session the Commission on the Status of Women will consider the issues of social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure because it believes that they are central to the development of public policies to achieve gender equality and the economic empowerment of women and girls. To guarantee sustainable development, States must adopt social protection and health and education systems based on a human rights perspective with a view to achieving gender equality, by means of public policies that recognize and address existing structural differences.

As recognized by the Commission on the Status of Women in its conclusions at its sixty-second session, progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the full realization of their human rights has been held back owing to the persistence of historical and structural unequal power relations between women and men. That is the result of ever greater gaps in access to health and education services, gender-based violence, discriminatory laws and policies, negative social norms, gender stereotypes and the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work.

In Argentina, as in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, women are far and away the main figures responsible for unpaid care and domestic work. That unequal distribution of responsibilities is an obstacle that prevents them from moving forward in various areas of life, but especially from joining the paid labour market and enjoying economic opportunities. Inequalities in the household and in labour market participation generate gender gaps in access to social protection. According to the International Labour Organization, worldwide, and particularly with regard to the burden of unpaid work in Argentina, women on average do at least two and a half times more domestic and caregiving work than men, as described in its report entitled "Women at work: Trends 2016". As a result, there are more women than men in informal work, without protection of any kind, including social protection. Although there was progress in Argentina in the form of Act No. 26.844, adopted to ensure greater legal protection for domestic work, the proportion of women domestic workers who are covered by such protection remains low. Although social protection addresses inequalities in employment, the extent to which they can be overcome depends on the structure of each country's social security system, the existence of mechanisms that can compensate for gender inequality in employment and recognition in the social protection system of time spent caring for children or older persons.

In addition, the absence of equal access to health services, particularly among adolescents and girls, leads to a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services and an increase in teenage pregnancy and especially early pregnancy in girls under 15 years of age, a lack of family planning to space births and the complications of unsafe and clandestine abortions.

With regard to education, while women remain in school longer than boys, even in poorer areas, pregnant girls drop out of school early and become teenage mothers, and have to seek employment at an early age in low-skilled, poorly paid jobs, perpetuating the cycle of poverty for themselves and their children.

That is why we propose:

- The development of programmes to support unpaid care work involving the Government, the private sector and families to ensure care for children up to 5 years of age, older persons, persons with disabilities and the mentally ill.
- The development of social protection policies for all working women, especially those in the informal economy, ensuring that social protection coverage is extended to all forms of employment.
- The promotion of policies to include women in the labour market to ensure a more equitable distribution of care work between men and women, including public policies, technologies and the development of facilities for the provision of care to reduce the burden of unpaid care work for women and families.
- The establishment of juridical and legal frameworks to ensure access to comprehensive and gender-sensitive social protection services, including services providing access to health, education and justice, especially in rural and suburban areas.
- The preparation of time-use surveys, accounting for sex and gender, promoting legal, social and cultural changes such as the extension of paternity and parental leave, greater engagement of men and boys in caregiving, investment in technologies and infrastructure (including water, sanitation and energy infrastructure) to reduce the time spent on domestic work and improvements in the social protection conditions of paid women workers in formal and informal sectors.
- An analysis of the future of work with a gender perspective and the development of policies to ensure equal impact for men and women of such key trends as the gig economy, automation and machine learning. These should be addressed from the perspective of their specific impact in terms of gender, focusing on social protection and the employment rights of women workers, seen as new forms of work that also should provide adequate social protection.
- The inclusion of initiatives to ensure that women in all their diversity and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons benefit from universal and equitable access to gender-responsive, quality health services; and that all people, including rural women and girls, have access to quality medicines and technology that are essential, affordable and effective, as well as to information and services regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights. This must include comprehensive sex education and access to quality sexual health services, including the provision of contraception and safe abortion.
- The assignment of priority to the right to education and placing emphasis on the fact that equal access to inclusive and quality education contributes to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with a special focus on rural areas, in addition to the promotion of equal participation of women in education and employment in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.